

REMARKS

The Official Action of 17 October 2006 has been carefully considered and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

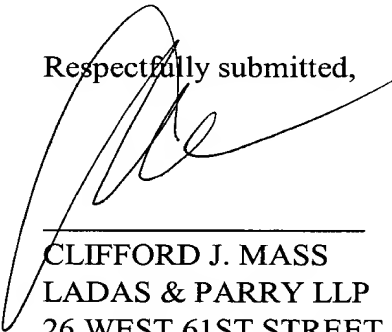
Claim 37 has been amended in accordance with the disclosure in the specification as filed at, for example, page 7, first full paragraph, to recite the use of an acid or acid salt in the regenerating step (b). Claim 40, the sole other independent claim, recites in step (b) the use of an “acidic salt of a di- or tri- protic acid to regenerate said protonated cation exchanger.” All claims presently of record thus now require the use of an acid or an acidic salt in the recited steps for regenerating the claimed protonated cation exchanger.

Neither of the references cited by the Examiner in the aforementioned Official Action in the sole remaining rejection of record (i.e., the rejection under 35 USC 103(a) over Powell et al in view of Walkup et al) teaches or suggests the use of an acid or acidic salt for regeneration as claimed. To the contrary, Walkup describes the use of a cation resin bed as a catalyst such that regeneration is neither required nor used (see Walkup at col. 14, lines 34-57). Powell describes the use of a strong alkali (NaOH, KOH, NH₄OH, CaOH, etc.) to regenerate a resin (see Powell at col. 3, lines 44-59). Accordingly, a combination of the cited references would not show all of the features of the invention as claimed even assuming for the sake of argument that the references were properly combinable. Moreover, neither reference provides a motivation for their modification to arrive at the claimed invention.

In the absence of anything in the cited art to teach or suggest the claimed feature, the references do not show all of the claim limitations and thus cannot be considered to set forth even a *prima facie* case of obviousness for the invention as claimed for this reason alone (see MPEP 706.02(j)). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the sole rejection of record has been overcome and should be withdrawn.

Applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in allowable form. An early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited and is believed to be fully warranted.

Respectfully submitted,



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